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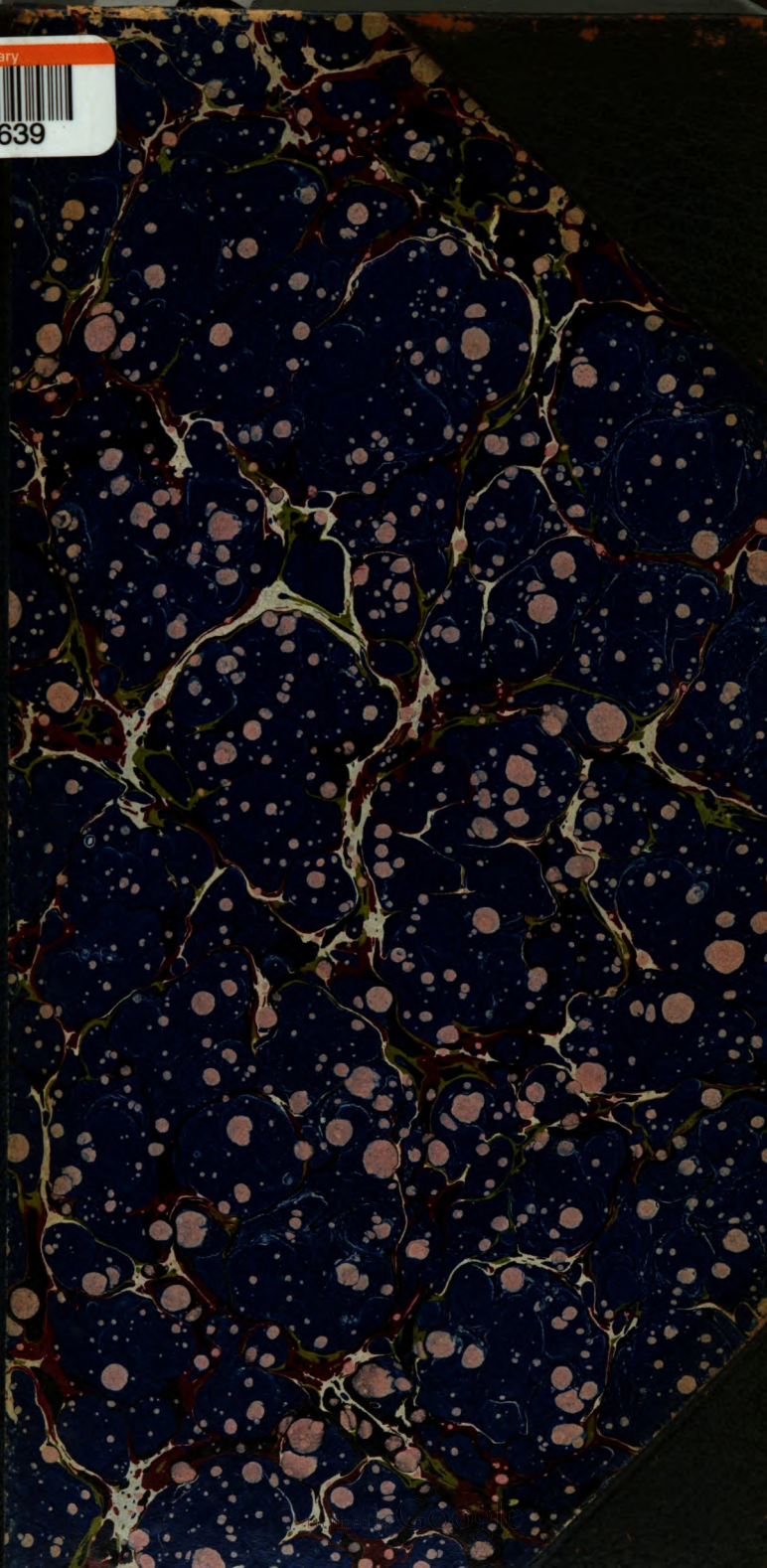
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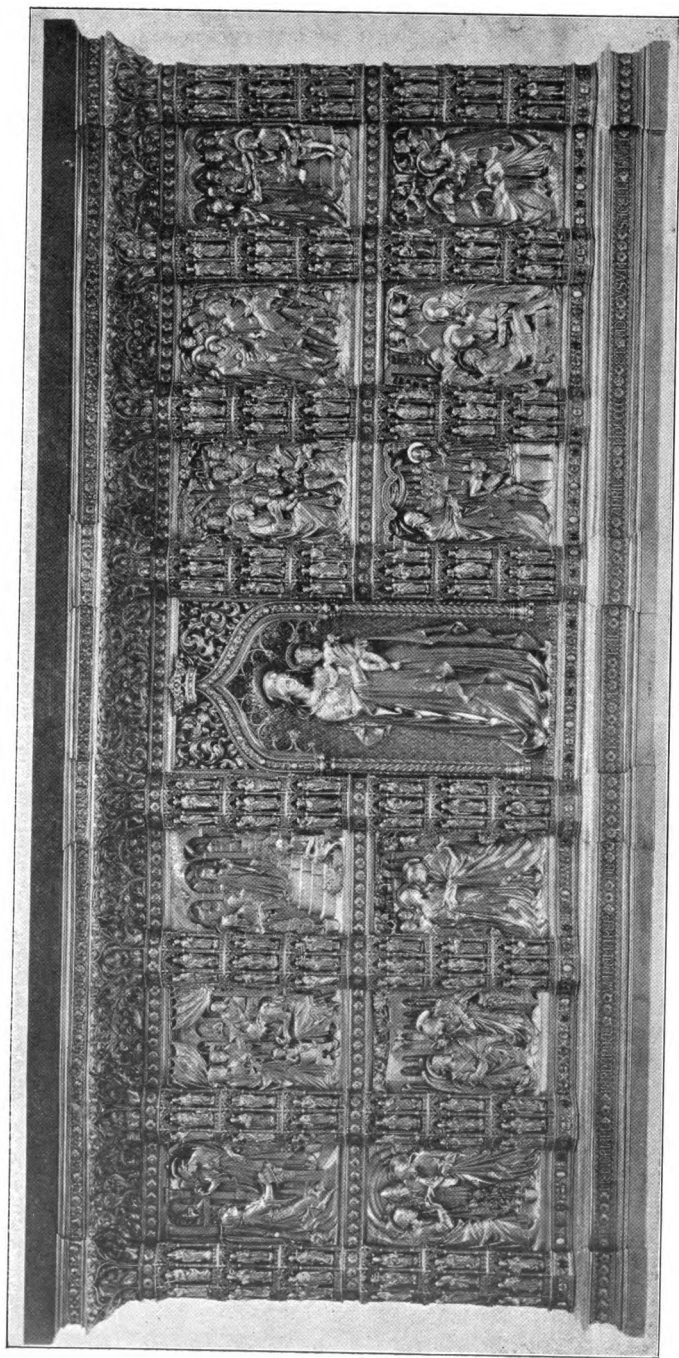
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S. · MARK'S · PHILADELPHIA
THE · SILVER · ALTAR



MDCCCCVII.
BARKENTIN · AND · KRALL · LONDON · ENGLAND



The Silver Altar.

1. m. 7. v. 1. 2.
ST · MARK'S · PHILADELPHIA
THE · SILVER · ALTAR



MDCCCCVII.
THE · WORK · OF · BARKENTIN · AND · KRALL
REGENT · STREET · LONDON

THE SILVER ALTAR OF ST. MARK'S, PHILADELPHIA.

VISITORS to Florence will recall, amongst the treasures of that great treasury of all the arts, the superb silver Altar which is now exhibited in the Museum of the Cathedral, and which is, or rather was, carried year by year to the Baptistery of the Cathedral to be used on the Feast of St. John the Baptist. Since Ant. Pallajuolo (1429-98) and his brother artists designed and made that celebrated Altar, nothing, so far as we know, has been produced at all approaching it in elaborate magnificence, until the present time when Mr. Krall, and the artists and craftsmen associated with him, have made the Altar for the Lady Chapel of St. Mark's, Philadelphia. It will add to the interest of those who visit St. Mark's, as well as of those who are accustomed to worship there, to have at hand some description of the construction, the arrangement, and iconography of this very splendid piece of modern ecclesiastical art.

The Altar, 7 ft. in length by 2 ft. in depth, and 3 ft. 3 in. in height, consists of a "mensa," or slab, in one piece of grey and black Irish marble, supported on a frame of solid silver backed by wood. The original idea was to provide simply a moveable frontal to the existing alabaster Altar, to be used only on Feasts of Our Lady. But as the work proceeded and grew in elaboration, it was felt that to move so fine a piece of work to and fro, several times in the course of every year, would be to expose it to great risk of damage. It was therefore determined to

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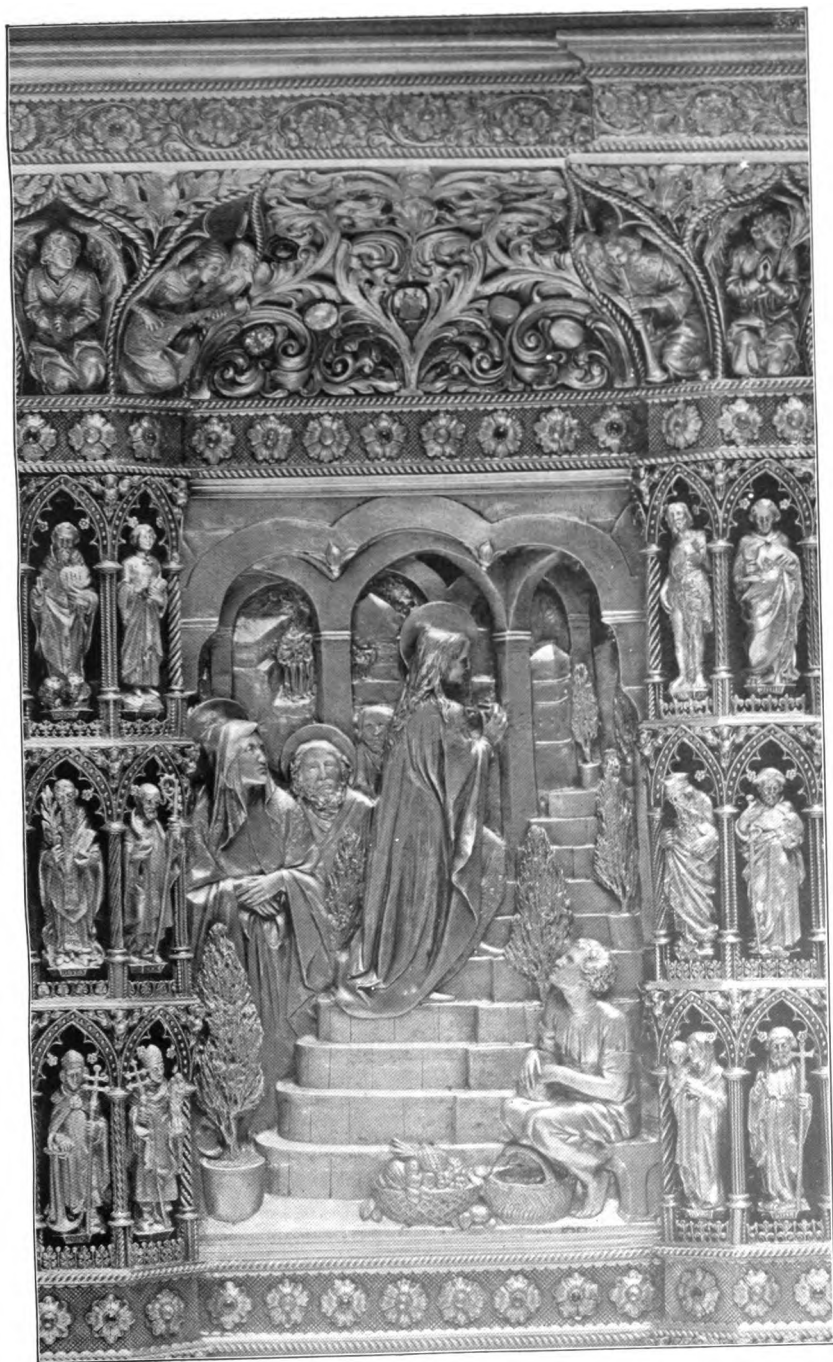
make the whole Altar—with the exception, of course, of the “mensa”—of silver, and to fix it permanently in its place. This has now been accomplished.

The ends of the Altar are comparatively plain. Each is divided into four panels, with moulded framing, and the panels are filled with simple designs in leaf work (*see Plate at end*).

The front of the Altar strikes the spectator at once by its extreme richness, and by the enormous quantity of figure-design that has been lavished upon its limited space. Eight half-columns project from the front surface to serve as supports for the “mensa,” and these columns divide the whole surface into seven spaces. Six of these spaces are further divided at half their height by a band. The seventh space—the central and somewhat larger space—is left undivided, and is filled by a niche. Compound twisted columns, with carved and jewelled bases and capitals, carry the richly-cusped arch of the canopy of the niche; the spandrils above this arch are filled with open-work foliage, and the point of the arch is surmounted by a floriated crown. A diaper of “fleur-de-lys,” on a ground of pale blue enamel, covers the back of the niche.

Within this niche stands a stately figure of Mary, holding in her arms her Child. The Holy Child grasps with one hand His Mother’s robe; in the other He holds the orb of the world. It is a singularly life-like, child-like, happy figure. The figure of the Mother is full of dignity, and specially noteworthy for the beauty of its finely-modelled drapery.

The twelve panels, which, with the exception of the niche, occupy the whole of the front, measure each of them 7 in. by 11¼ in. They are filled with subjects from the Life of the Blessed Virgin. The series begins on the extreme left of the upper row.



Panel 3.

1. *The Angel's Message to St. Anne.*

St. Anne, the wife of Joachim, kneeling at a prayer-desk, receives from an Angel the glad tidings that she will have a daughter, who shall bring forth the Saviour of the world.

On the same level, to the right, we have—

2. *The Birth of Mary.*

St. Anne is seen on a couch in the background. In the foreground are three friends, who are ministering to her child.

On the right of this panel—

3. *Mary's Presentation in the Temple.*

Mary in her girlhood is seen ascending the steps of the Temple, to which she has been led by her father and mother. In the background are the courts of the Temple, and beyond the courts a glimpse of the Mount of Olives.

The series is now continued in the left panel of the lower row.

4. *The Espousal of Mary and Joseph.*

In the presence of the Priest and several witnesses, Mary is betrothed to St. Joseph. A rose in full bloom stands in the foreground.

5. *The Annunciation.*

Mary, kneeling at a richly-carved prayer-desk, and with her arms crossed upon her breast, turns towards the Angel who kneels near her and is holding a lily in his hand. The holy Dove hovers above Mary's head. An arcade encloses the figures, and through the arches of the arcade the trees of a garden are seen.

*

6. *The Visitation.*

Mary and St. Elizabeth meet and embrace in the garden of St. Elizabeth's house. Three women stand by, gazing sympathetically at the scene.

Returning to the upper row of subjects, we have, in the panel to the right of the niche—

7. *The Visit of the Shepherds to Bethlehem.*

In a stable thatched with straw, our Lady is seated with the divine Infant on her lap. St. Joseph is watching over her, and the shepherds have come to worship the new-born Saviour. One of them, his dog by his side, is kneeling with folded hands, and gazes at the Child.

To the right of this we have—

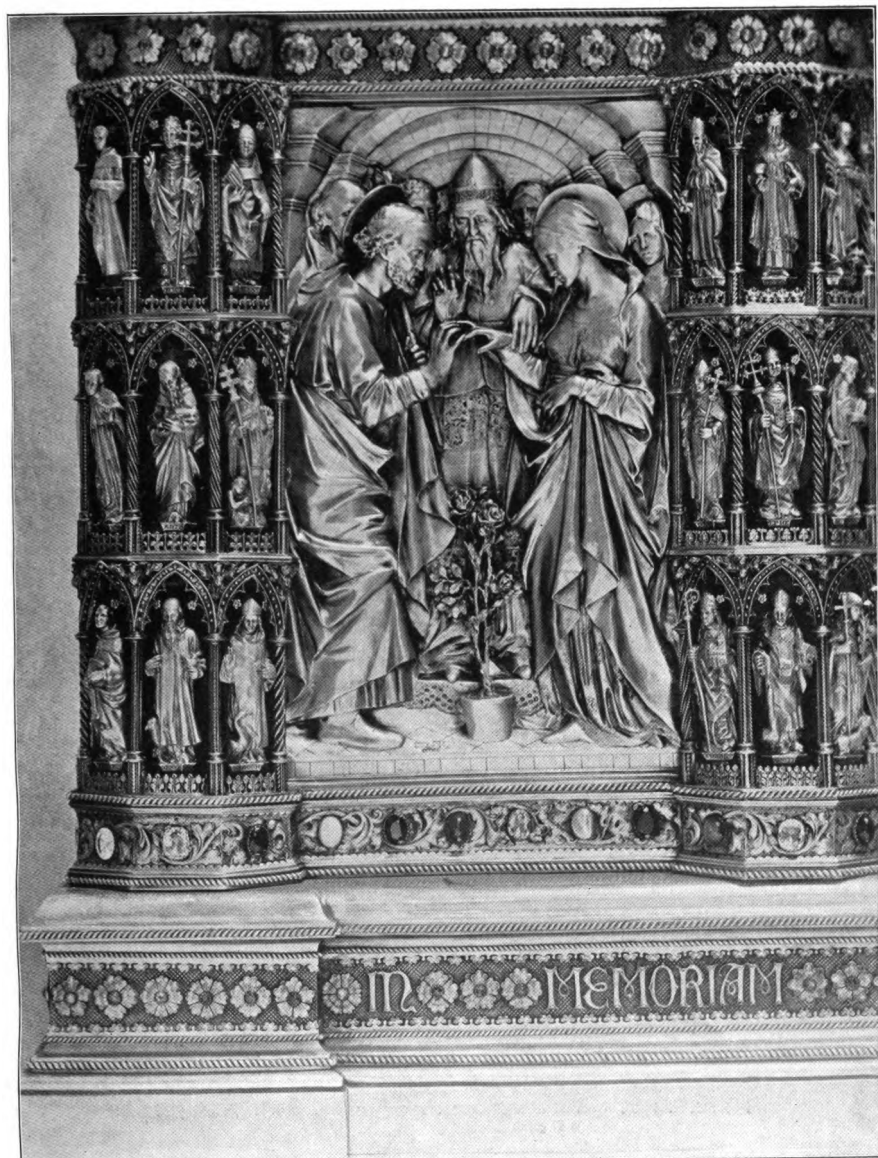
8. *The Flight into Egypt.*

Mary, seated upon an ass, holds with both arms her Child. St. Joseph, carrying provision for the way, leads the ass. In the background, an Angel holds up a veil to screen the Holy Family from their pursuers.

9. *The Finding in the Temple.*

The Child Jesus is seated on the steps inside the Temple. A large book rests upon His knees, and other books lie about Him. The aged priests and scribes in the background converse, wondering at the Child's questions. Mary, in trouble, expostulates, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" and He is answering, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

The series is now continued at the lower level, where in the panel on the right of the niche we have—



C. C. KRALL, *fecit* LONDON

Panel 4.

10. *The Miracle at Cana.*

In the front is the figure of the Lord ; His Hands are raised to bless the water that a servant is pouring into the great jars. Mary waits and watches. In the background the marriage feast is proceeding.

11. *At the Foot of the Cross.*

Mary and the holy women are supporting the lifeless Body of the Lord, which has been lowered from the Cross. In the background the Cross is seen, and two Angels are bending over the sorrowful group in worship.

12. *The Coronation of our Blessed Lady.*

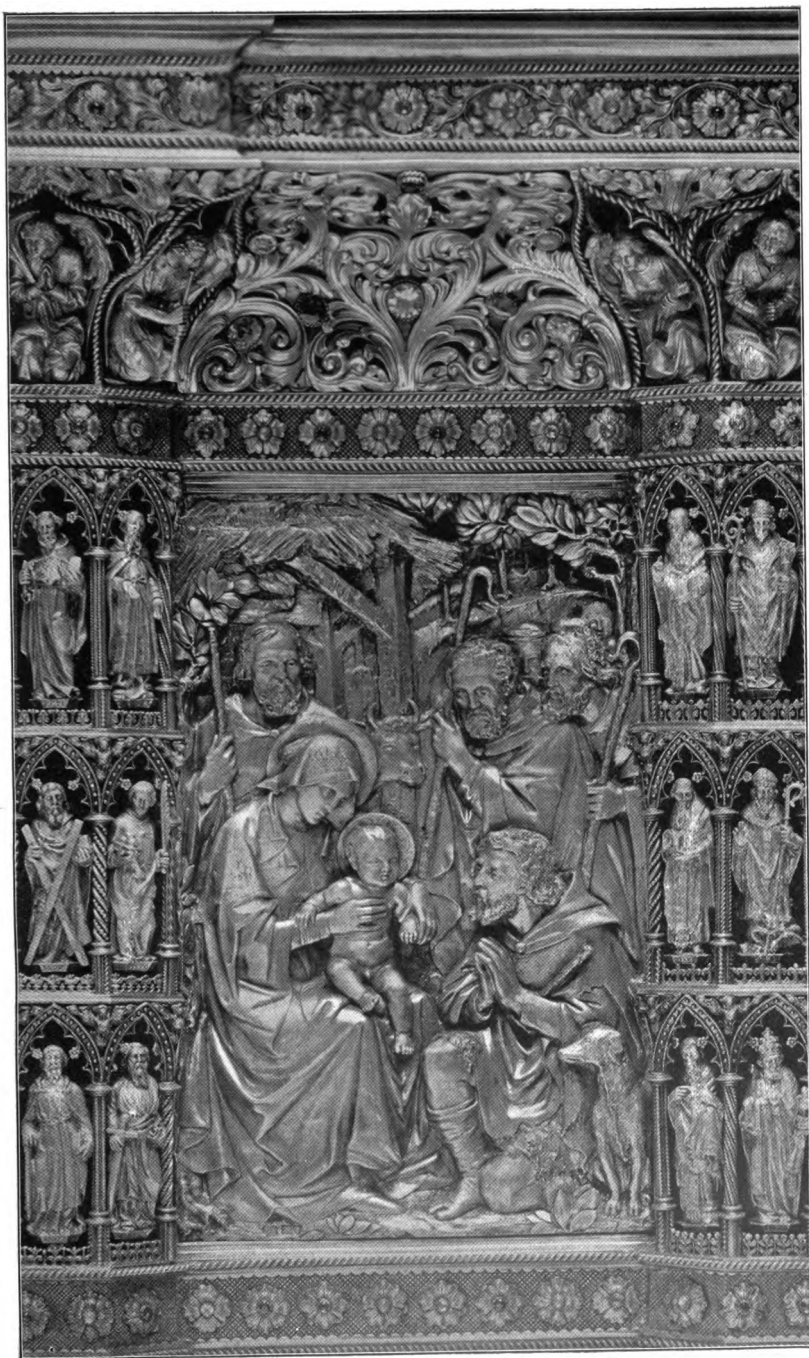
This is the climax of the whole series. The Lord Jesus receives His blessed Mother unto Himself, that "where He is, she may be also ;" and He crowns her faithfulness with "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (St. John xiv. 3 ; Rev. ii. 10 ; 1 St. Peter v. 4).

The eight half-columns which support the Altar Slab form a frame of extraordinary richness to these panels ; each half-column carries on its face eighteen small niches, arranged in sets of three, one above the other, and in every niche is the figure of a Saint in complete relief. These figures, 144 in number, have been separately modelled ; they bear their characteristic emblems, and their names. The capitals of the columns contain, each of them, a group of three kneeling Angels, some with hands clasped in prayer, and some with musical instruments. A rich band of foliage and scroll work, in deep relief, connects the capitals, and forms a supporting cornice for the "mensa." Lines of roses with jewelled centres divide the lower from the upper row of subjects, and each subject from the cornice and the plinth.

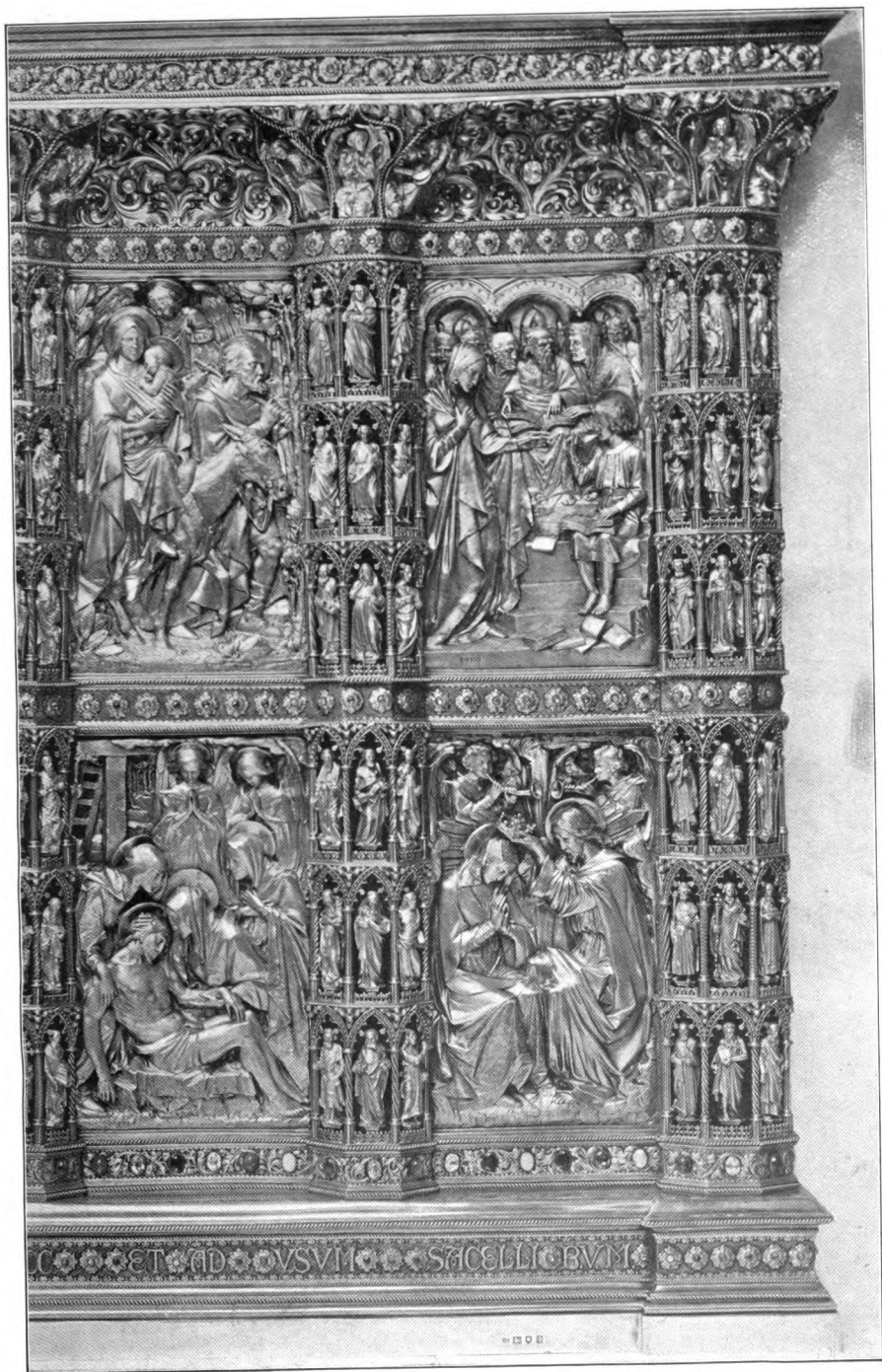
The 144 figures in the niches of the columns are arranged, with one or two slight dislocations, chronologically, beginning at the extreme right at the top with Adam, and proceeding downwards through the outer line of figures. From the lowest figure of each line, we return to the highest figure of the next line to the left, and so on. Following in consecutive order, the little figures represent the Saints of the Old Testament, and the Major and Minor Prophets, passing on into the Saints of the Catholic Church: but the strict sequence is interrupted in order that the Saints and Angels of the New Testament may stand on either side of the central figure. Then follow the Confessors and Martyrs; holy men and women of the later time; the great Doctors of the Western Church and of the Eastern Church; the lesser theologians; the founders of religious orders, and the more conspicuous of the British Missionary Saints and Martyrs.

The composition as a whole, in spite of its infinity of detail, is yet a unity, and singularly compact and harmonious in effect. Over 400 jewels are distributed over the work: they are however so carefully placed that nowhere do they draw off attention to themselves, but are felt to add a subtle refinement and variety to the light and colour which play so delightfully over the whole surface.

When we consider how many hundreds of figures, in high and low relief, there are; the interest, variety and beauty of the arrangement and modelling of these figures; the wealth of varied design in the decorative parts; we cannot but feel that the greatest praise is due to all concerned in the production of this remarkable Altar—artists, designers, and craftsmen. They have achieved a monumental work which does the greatest credit to them all, and which will remain as a very splendid and very delightful presentation of Twentieth-Century English Ecclesiastical Art.



Panel 7.



Panels 8, 9, 11, 12.



The Altar. Side view.

The Pillars.

Reading from right to left.

I.

Aaron
Joshua
Samuel
David
Hezekiah
Elijah

Sarah
Melchizedek
Isaac
Jacob
Joseph
Moses

Adam
Eve
Abel
Enoch
Noah
Abraham

II.

Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah

Elisha
[Judas Maccabæus]
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Daniel

III.

St. Athanasius
St. Chrysostom
St. Basil
St. Gregory Naz.
Dionysius Areop.
St. John of Damascus

St. Irenæus
St. Hilary
St. Ambrose
St. Augustine of Hippo
St. Jerome
St. Gregory the Great

St. Matthew
St. Mark
St. Luke
St. John
St. Justin M.
St. Cyprian

IV.

St. Michael
St. Joseph
St. Joachim
St. Simon of Cyrene
St. Veronica
St. Longinus

St. Peter
St. Andrew
St. James-the-Less
St. Simon
St. Thaddeus
St. Matthias

St. Joseph Arimath.
St. Stephen
St. Paul
St. Barnabas
St. Jude
St. Timothy

V.

St. John Baptist
Zacharias
St. Elizabeth
St. Simeon
St. Anna
St. Lazarus

St. John Ap.
St. James-the-Great
St. Philip
St. Bartholomew
St. Thomas
St. Matthew

St. Gabriel
St. Raphael
St. Anne
St. Mary Magdalene
St. Martha
St. Mary of Bethany

VI.

St. Alban
St. Denys
St. George
St. Nicholas
St. Perpetua
St. Cecilia

St. Ignatius M.
St. Polycarp
St. Clement Rom.
St. Laurence
St. Sebastian
St. Vincent

St. Clement Alex.
St. Cyril of Jerusalem
St. Anselm
St. Bernard
St. Bonaventure
St. Thomas Aquinas

VII.

St. Monica
St. Giles
St. Augustin Cant.
St. Patrick
St. David
St. Chad

St. Catherine
St. Boniface
St. Edmund K. & M.
St. Edward the Conf.
St. Alphege
St. Martin

St. Agnes
St. Agatha
St. Lucy
St. Prisca
St. Faith
St. Margaret

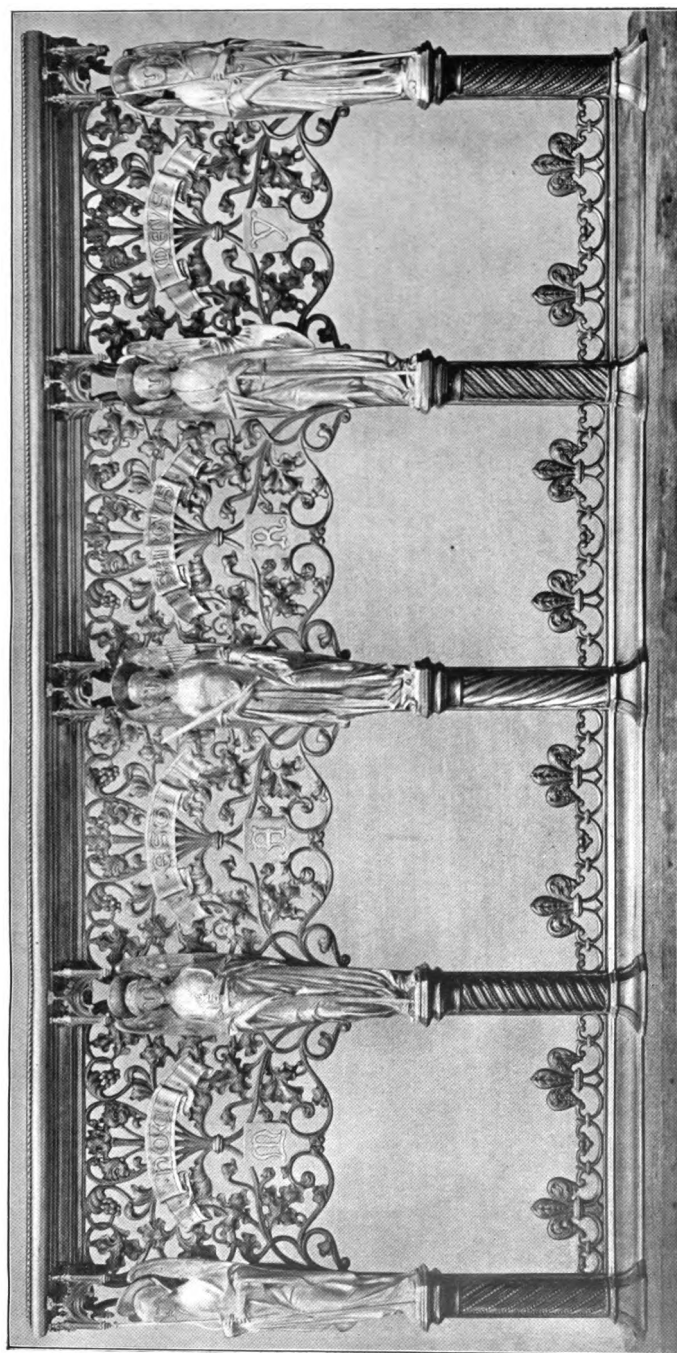
VIII.

St. Robert of Cit.
St. Bruno
St. Gilbert
St. Francis of Assisi
St. Clare
St. Dominic

St. Helen
St. Cuthbert
St. Oswald
St. Thomas of Cant.
St. Anthony
St. Benedict

St. Etheldreda
V. Bede
St. Swithun
St. Dunstan
St. Edmund Abp.
St. Hugh

THE ALTAR RAIL.



In bronze. The ten Guardian Angels, Scrolls and Shields are in silver. Only half of the Rail is shewn in the Picture.

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